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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on problems that students from predominantly Muslim backgrounds had in completing practical components of tertiary Personal Development, Health, and Physical Education (PDHPE) courses in Australian schools. The research investigated the PDHPE programs in western Sydney high schools with high Arabic speaking populations. The study sought to identify barriers to effective teaching and learning of PDHPE objectives that might arise because of the students' cultural backgrounds. Study methods included student, teacher, and parent surveys, teacher surveys conducted in four western Sydney schools: a male only school, a state female only school, a Catholic female only school, and a co-educational school. The schools were comprised of 54% of students from Arabic speaking homes and 85% of all students from non-English speaking background schools. Major conclusions include: (1) schools need to be more culturally sensitive in what they teach and creative in sources used so all students can relate to the curriculum; (2) teachers need to be aware of problems that may prevent students from participating in the PDHPE curriculum because of students cultural values; (3) students and parents need to know the expectations and demands of the curriculum area and be encouraged to contribute to its development and implementation; (4) teachers' perceptions, needs, values and attitudes should be acknowledged in the presentation of programs; (5) preservice teachers need to develop knowledge and skills with culturally diverse students under the supervision of teachers of a different cultural background to their own; and (6) such problems associated with PDHPE and students from culturally diverse backgrounds that have emerged will only increase in frequency as the diversity of the student population increases in the schools. (Contains 35 references.) (EH)

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Personal Development, Health and Physical Education in Cultural Context: Perspectives of Arabic and Non-Arabic Speaking Background Year Nine Students in Four Western Sydney High Schools

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** This is a summary of the full paper. Copies of the full paper and the survey instrument can be obtained from the authors.

Australia, like a number of other nations, has opened itself up to waves of migrants in the twentieth century. Successive governments have maintained a reasonably high level of migrant intake stimulated by economic and humanitarian motives. The pattern of countries of origin of migrants has changed as global situations have altered. The Second World War resulted in many Central Europeans searching for a new life in a new country; problems in the Middle East in the 1970's forced numerous families to settle in the safety of the southern hemisphere; south-east Asians from a number of countries looked to Australia in the '80's and '90's in the hope of a more secure future for themselves and their families.

For some time, this cultural diversity meant little to schools in Australia, as students from culturally different backgrounds were expected to adhere to the government policy of assimilation and conform to the dominant Anglo-Australian culture (McInerney, 1987ab). The emergence of multiculturalism in the 1970's encouraged the retention and celebration of one's cultural background, and schools played an important role in the acceptance and development of this new government policy (Kalantzis, Cope, Noble & Poynting, 1990). Under this official multicultural policy, schools are required by law to provide equal educational opportunities for all students, irrespective of their backgrounds. Schools can no longer teach from a dominant monocultural perspective, but must acknowledge the differences that students bring from their cultural backgrounds, and must regard these 'differences as strengths upon which to build rather than deficits to be remediated,' (Swisher & Swisher, 1986, p.36). In theory, such a recognition and regard gives status to the students from culturally different backgrounds, enhancing their self-image and giving a sense of power to people who traditionally are powerless (McDonald & Fairfax, 1993). Whilst legislation and 'political correctness' may make it appear that our schools, and society in general, are moving towards ethnorelativity, that is the total acceptance and appreciation of cultural differences, the pathway 'from deliberate exclusion of individuals, to acknowledging the need for diversity, to ultimately valuing diversity' (DeSensi, 1995, p.39) is one that demands effort and commitment on behalf of the individuals involved.

This pathway is made easier by such institutions as the New South Wales (NSW) Department of School Education (DSE) recognising the '... diverse characteristics and needs ...' of students and expecting teachers to '... respect and value the individuality of each student ...' (Board of Studies, 1992, p.31). While it is important that education should '... promote a common set of values which are widely shared by the Australian community ...,' it is equally important to realise '... that schools operate within the context of different communities and serve to cultivate certain values expected of them by these communities.' (Board of Studies, 1991, p.4). These statements emanate from the syllabi of one of the Key Learning Areas in New South Wales known as Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE). PDHPE is a (relatively) new KLA in the NSW education system and is a collection of subjects

covering physical education, health and sport. It is a curriculum area that aims to improve the personal growth of individuals in terms of their self-esteem and social responsibility, their fitness development and movement skills, and their ability to make decisions that are going to affect their own and their community's health.

The content of the thirteen years of PDHPE in the NSW state school system includes the science of movement, sport experiences, and studies of nutrition and personal hygiene. It also involves topics that are more specific to Australia as a Westernised nation in the late twentieth century, such as adolescent dietary habits, taking responsibility for one's own health, making positive contributions to community health and developing relationships. Because it deals with issues that arise in society, the content must be dynamic and ever-changing. It must also reflect the diverse nature of society. In this latter context, there are potential problems regarding the teaching of PDHPE that emanate from the cultural background of the students to be taught. In particular, topics that relate to physical education, health studies and pastoral care (for example, human sexuality, growth and development, values, relationships, decision-making, drug use and safety) may create conflicts for teachers, students, and/or their parents in the educational process.

What does this mean for certain areas of Sydney where almost 20% of the community is Muslim? What significant problems arise for students and teachers in PDHPE in schools in these areas? To an Arab, the family unit is not made up of father, mother, brothers and sisters only , but includes an extended family community made up of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws (Abdel-Halim, 1989). In some cases, second cousins and neighbours are as close as family members. This family community is central to the lives of its members. They see each other often and celebrate and give each other support in happy and sad occasions. Often, aunts and uncles have a say in family matters concerning children as much as parents do. These closely knit extended families hold strong moral and social values and cultural traditions, and children are expected to adhere to the norms of behaviour of the family community. Any behaviour outside this is met with great disapproval not only from the parents but from all members of the family community. Some of the moral, social and cultural aspectsof behaviour are very much affected by factors such as the wealth, education and social class of a particular family and the nature of the community in which the family lives. Another important factor is religion. Behaviours affected by social factors such as wealth and education adjust to suit the needs of the time. But behaviours which are dictated by religious teachings are inflexible. For example, according to Islamic teachings, boys and girls should be separated at the age of puberty and for girls, under no circumstances must any part of the body except the face and hands be exposed (Abdel-Halim, 1989).

Islamic teachings have significant implications for schools. Although Islam encourages and recommends Physical Education and Sport: "Teach your children to run, swim, ride and throw the javelin", (quoted in Abdel-Halim, 1989, p.16). Muslim students are to adhere to Islamic teachings and according to this boys and girls are not to mix in physical education classes and the use of costumes which expose "some delicate part of the body which is required to be covered" is not permitted. Muslim parents expect their daughters to observe these standards, so girls are not to swim in mixed boys/girls swimming pools, and when doing physical education, should have their bodies covered and wear appropriate clothing. Furthermore, they are encouraged not to mix with boys in these activities. Although there are few restrictions on boys, shared male showers and changing in common change rooms are not permitted. As to the content of personal development programs (sex education, in particular) the problem seems to be more in the perceived teaching approach taken in delivering these programs : "... it is not the content of the course that is objectionable to Muslim parents and students, it is the way sex education is imparted and presented. Among the serious objections is the age group at which certain aspects are presented and discussed, such as contraceptives, sexual intercourse, and the way some teachers deal with these aspects in a manner completely divorced from moral values and ethics." (Abdel-Halim, 1989,p.9).

Arabic families living in Australia attempt to keep the same norms of behaviour that they have had in their homeland, and which are dictated by social or religious teachings. Arabic background students, therefore, find themselves living in more than one community: the family's, the school's and the Australian community at large. When the expectations of these different communities clash, students find themselves in conflict either with the school or with their parents. It is very important, therefore, that the school and parents understand each others' points of view especially on important educational issues such as personal development.

To date, little research has been conducted in this area in Australia so that research findings to verify the existence of potential conflicts involved in teaching PDHPE to Arabic background students is scarce. However, some light may be thrown on the situation by consideration of research completed overseas. In their study of an English secondary school with a high South Asian Muslim population, Carroll and Hollinshead (1993) identify four problem areas, '... P.E. kit, showers, Ramadan and extra curricular activities.'(p. 65). These areas were points of conflict between pupils, their parents, the Asian community, and teaching staff of the school, as well as within the pupils themselves as they tried to adapt. The wearing of uniforms for movement activities caused embarrassment for those students whose religion demanded that they keep certain parts of their bodies covered in public. This embarrassment was experienced by males as well as females, and the situation was exacerbated by many of the activities being conducted in such public places as playgrounds and community parks. Communal showers - part of the school's health education program - caused severe problems, even to the extent that some students absented themselves from school on particular days. The celebration of religious festivals, such as Ramadan, in which no food nor drink is allowed to be consumed in daylight hours, meant that physical activity, and resultant dehydration, could be dangerous to children undergoing exercise. After-school activities appeared to be a major problem for female Muslim students. As in western societies, the restrictions on females tend to be stricter than those on males, and, even though many females students expressed a desire to be involved, few had been able to avail themselves of the opportunity. Carroll and Hollinshead investigated the attitudes of the teachers in the school and found their lack of appreciation of the magnitude of the problem, as perceived by the Muslim students, to be a major cause of the students' embarrassment and discomfort. The authors suggested improved pre-service teacher education, the introduction of stronger anti-racist policies and closer links between schools and communities as solutions to some of these problems.

Similar areas of potential conflict are highlighted by Williams (1989, pp.164-165) who also mentions the areas of aquatics and co-educational classes as sites for conflict. In an Australian setting, Lindsay, McEwen and Knight (1987, p.76) identify aquatics and dancing as areas of concern, and Clyne (1994, p.6) refers to problems for Muslims associated with dress requirements for physical activity, attitudes to swimming in co-educational situations and restrictions on drinking during Ramadan. Lindsay et al (1987, p.76) mention some of the problems that arise regarding Muslims and certain health issues 'as human relationships, sex education, parentcraft and health education are the responsibility of the family rather than the school.'

In summary, the major potential areas of conflict in teaching PDHPE for Arabic background children appear to be dress, public display during physical activity, mixed-sex activities, personal development education, lack of socialisation and parental encouragement for PDHPE related activities, unfamiliar sports, religious observances, and lack of valuing PDHPE by the community.

This study arose from the authors' concerns about problems that students from predominantly Muslim backgrounds had in completing practical components of tertiary PDHPE courses. This concern lead to an investigation of PDHPE programs in western Sydney high schools with high Arabic speaking background (ASB) populations.The study sets out to identify some of the barriers to effective teaching and learning of Personal Development, Health and

Physical Education that might arise from the cultural diversity of the students' backgrounds.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

1 Identify and describe the level of participation of year 9 (age 14 years) students in a range of sporting and physical activities in school.

2 Identify key variables acting as cultural barriers to learning and teaching PDHPE.

3 Examine group differences (Arabic and non-Arabic) on attitudes towards PDHPE.

4 Consider implications of the findings for developing effective educational practices for PDHPE in culturally diverse school settings.

OVERVIEW OF STUDY METHODS

Instruments

a) Student Survey:

Pencil and paper survey (56 questions) included-

* demographic & cultural variables,
* school participation in sports, physical activities and carnivals,
* key components of PDHPE curriculum and parental, peer and personal attitudes and beliefs towards PDHPE.

b) Teacher Survey:

Pencil and paper survey (56 questions) included-

* demographic & cultural variables including language and birth backgrounds,
* school participation in sports, physical activities and carnivals,
* key components of PDHPE curriculum and parental, peer and personal attitudes and beliefs towards PDHPE
* open ended questions on PDHPE program, the role of sport and any issues?
* issued to all staff of four schools.

c) Parent Survey:

Pencil and paper survey (56 questions) included-

* demographic & cultural variables including language and birth backgrounds,
* school participation in sports, physical activities and carnivals,
* key components of PDHPE curriculum and parental, peer and personal attitudes and beliefs towards PDHPE
* open ended questions on PDHPE program, the role of sport and any issues?
* issued to all parents of sample: English version and Arabic version.

Administration & Analyses-

* As PDHPE and sport participation is potentially controversial at schools characterised by cultural diversity, care was taken to involve the local communities,
* The survey was approved by the NSW Deparment of School Education, School Committees, and the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Western Sydney Macarthur,
* Research assistants from the culturally diverse communities assisted with the conduct of the confidential survey,
* The survey was administered at each school by the research team,
* Teachers at schools did not participate in the administration of the survey,
* The survey form was read aloud in English to student respondents while they completed it.

Participants
The Schools:
* 4 schools - male only; State female only; Catholic female only; co-educational.

* All schools were located in the Western region of Sydney with 54% of students from Arabic speaking homes
* 85% of all students came from NESB (non English speaking background) schools.

The Students:
* 362 year 9 in 1995
* 156 male
* 206 female
* Average age 14.5 years
* 84% of sample lived with mother & father
* 9% lived with mother only
* 2% lived with father only

Cultural background and religious practices of students:
* 34% Muslim, 42% Catholic, 8% Protestant, 8% Buddhist, 2% Hindu
* 32% said they frequently practised religion, 54% occasionally, 13% never
* The cultural traditions most cited were: public religious practice [72%]; personal religious devotions [29%]; complying with ethical rules and regulations [16%]
* The reasons given for importance of these cultural traditions were: Koran [8%]; intrapersona religious commitment [29%]; external compulsion [7%]; parental and cultural influences [35%]; 14% cultural traditions not important; 16% did not know or did not respond.

The Staff:
Staff surveys were distributed to all staff at the four high schools.

The Parents:
Parental surveys were distributed using the Home Liasion Officers associated with each school. These sought to discover if parents were uneasy with any of the so-called "sensitive" issues in PDHPE, such as HIV-AIDS education, sexuality, abortion and drug education, and if they wanted closer links between school topics and their cultural background. Sixteen parental responses were received - 3 of these are in Arabic and still have to be translated. Of the other thirteen, details included:

Gender	Original Country	Religion	Strictly Practised	Years in Aust.
8 males/ 5 females	11 Lebanese/ 1 Vietnamese/ 1 Fijian	10 Muslims/ 1 Buddhist/ 1 Maronite/ 1 Christian	9 yes/4 no	most over 20 years

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS SUMMARY

As there were statistically significant differences between the ASB and NASB groups on individual items comprising the PDHPE scales, MANOVA with the five scales as dependent variables, and background (ASB, NASB) as the independent variable, was conducted. This analysis indicated significant main effects. In order to ascertain where the main effects lay, oneway ANOVAS were conducted with each of the five scales as dependent variables. There were only main effects for PDHPE and cultural values and PDHPE and Personal Development.

As the above analyses indicated that there were differences between the NASB and ASB groups on two of the scales, a further series of analyses were conducted to ascertain if beliefs about PDHPE were related to elements of cultural values such as frequency of practising religious and cultural customs, and other background variables. MANOVAS were conducted on the scales derived from factor analysis described earlier. All five PDHPE scales

were included as dependent variables and four independent variables, viz, whether the students practised their religion, whether the students actively practised cultural traditions, sex of student, and lastly, school attended, were included in two separate analyses. (It was necessary to add sex and school to different MANOVA in order to avoid empty cells). The first two of the independent variables were used as proxies for level of cultural identification. Analyses were conducted for the full group and for the Arabic language group. Tests for homogeneity of variance were conducted to confirm the suitability of the data for MANOVA.

Multivariate tests of significant differences for the five dependent variables with practising religion, practising culture, and sex for the full group, indicated significant main effects for sex and practising culture. Follow-up univariate F-tests on the main effects for each of the dependent variables indicated that PDHPE and Personal Development differs significantly across sex, and Sport and Socialisation differs significantly according to whether students actively practice cultural traditions. The nature of these differences were explored with follow-up ANOVAS.

There were also significant interaction effects for practising religion and practising culture on PDHPE and Mixed Gender Activities and PDHPE and Personal Development. Follow-up univariate F-tests were unable to indicate where significant differences lay among the eight groups owing to the small cell sizes in a number of cases. Mutlivariate tests of significance for the five depenedent variables with practising religion, practising culture and school indicated no significant main effects.

Multivariate ANOVA were also conducted by Arabic language grouping. Results showed significant main effects for school and follow-up F-tests indicated that Personal Development and PDHPE differed significantly according to the school attended.

There were significant interaction effects of practising culture and sex on Personal Development and PDHPE and Valuing PDHPE.

Multivariate ANOVA was also conducted with the five independent variables outlined above and religion (Muslim, n=125, Catholic, n=153). Significant main effects were obtained for PDHPE and Cultural Values, PDHPE and Mixed Sex Activities, and PDHPE and Personal Development.

Oneway ANOVA were conducted with the data from students who nominated that they spoke Arabic at home. In this instance there were 103 Muslim students and 29 Catholic students. These analyses used the same five independent variables. The results replicated those just reported.

RESULTS

Table 1 below, shows only the student survey questions that showed a significant difference between the ASB and NASB groups ($p<0.05$) on unpaired T-tests.

TABLE 1
Survey Items compromising five PDHPE scales for Arabic language group (n-141) and non-Arabic language group (n=221), and the percentage frequencies for each response for each group, grouped as disagree, unsure and agree.

Survey Items:

* Brackets = non-Arabic speaking background (NASB) students

Scale 1: VALUING PDHPE	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
Q4 I like what is taught in the PDHPE program	19 [19]	16 [20]	65 [61]
Q11 Most of my friends find PDHPE important to their health and development	18 [17]	29 [41]	53 [42]
Q8 Most of my friends find PDHPE interesting	19 [28]	33 [39]	48 [33]
Q2 I enjoy participating in organized school sports	06 [20]	10 [09]	84 [71]
Q13 Some people need to learn about PDHPE, but for me it is a waste of time	63 [75]	12 [13]	25 [11]

* Brackets = NASB students

Scale 2: PDHPE and CULTURAL VALUES	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
Q55 I am embarrassed changing into PE and sports clothes at school.	68 [79]	11 [10]	21 [11]
Q33 I would be more interested in PDHPE if it reflected some of my traditions and customs.	35 [45]	34 [36]	31 [19]
Q38 If the school used PDHPE instructors from my cultural group my parents would support the course more strongly.	26 [43]	34 [36]	31 [19]
Q40 Personal development and health topics should be relevant to my culture.	29 [36]	31 [45]	40 [19]
Q54 My parents don't like me socialising outside the school	54 [75]	18 [10]	28 [15]
Q23 Some of what I learn in PDHPE classes conflicts with family values.	26 [53]	42 [28]	32 [18]

* Brackets = NASB students

Scale 3: PDHPE and PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
Q57 Birth control education should be the responsibility of the family and not school.	53 [68]	30 [22]	17 [11]
Q35 The personal development and health subjects should include birth control education.	15 [06]	20 [16]	65 [78]
Q36 The personal development and health subjects should include HIV-AIDS education.	07 [03]	09 [04]	84 [93]

* Brackets = NASB students

Scale 4: SPORT and SOCIALISATION	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
Q28 My father is actively involved in a sporting activity	69 [59]	15 [18]	16 [23]
Q47 Leisure activities such as swimming and running are important to me.	08 [15]	12 [13]	80 [73]
Q44 My family allows me to stay after school for extra curricula activities.	22 [18]	27 [18]	51 [64]

Scale 5: PDHPE and MIXED GENDER ACTIVITIES
No significant differences were found on any survey question item between ASB and NASB students for this scale.

Table 2 below, contrasts the sports participation rates and the favourite sport of the sample. Participation percentages included more than one sport. The male population in the study schools are very keen on rugby league football. Although students in the study have high participation rates in court sports, track and field and field sports, these sporting activities did not have corresponding high percentages as a favourite sport.

TABLE 2
Contrasts between participation rates and favourite sports

Sporting Activity	% Participation	% Favourite
Rugby League Football	38%	31%
Court sports eg: basketball, tennis	46%	23%
Track & field	30%	20%
Aquatics	19%	12%
Field sports eg: hockey	28%	7%

Table 3 below, indicates a positive valuing of PDHPE activities for both the ASB and NASB groups.
For Sport and Socialisation, there is a higher unsure percentage for both groups. Questions in this area looked at encouragement and participation from both parents, leisure participation, and sporting socialisation.
The Cultural Values scale included a variety of questions that examined changing dress for PE, religious traditions and PDHPE, public participation in PDHPE, and cultural beliefs and PDHPE.
Both groups supported the Mixed Gender Activities scale.
The PDHPE and PD questions included statements that PD topics should be the responsibility of the family and not the school. As both groups tended to think the school should have the responsibility, this explains the high disagreement percentages.

TABLE 3
Grouped percentages on disagree, unsure, and agree responses on the five PDHPE scales

Scale	Disagree to Strongly Disagree	Unsure	Agree to Strongly Agree
	(* Brackets = NASB students)		
Valuing PDHPE	06% [06%]	30% [34%]	60% [64%]
Sport and Socialisation	13% [12%]	55% [55%]	32% [33%]
Cultural Values and PDHPE	45% [60%]	47% [36%]	08% [04%]
Mixed Gender Activities	10% [06%]	29% [27%]	61% [67%]
PDHPE and Personal Development	60% [71%]	35% [26%]	05% [03%]

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Student Surveys:

1 Stronger student participation in PDHPE than staff anticipated at all schools.
2 Very positive valuing of PDHPE program by Arabic and non-Arabic background students.
3 Concern regarding large numbers of both groups who apparently receive little direct or indirect encouragement from their parents, to participate in sporting activities, and who don't perceive sport as important to their culture.
4 Both groups gave strong support for mixed gender activities and the role PDHPE should play in the socialisation of heterosexual contact. However, the Arabic speaking background (ASB) group was significantly less positive.
5 More of the ASB group were concerned that cultural values made it difficult to engage in PDHPE related activities than the non-Arabic background group.
6 Fifty percent of the ASB group have problems with issues such as dress, public display, independence and cultural values and the PDHPE program.
7 More ASB students agreed that personal development topics should be the responsibility of the family and not the school.
8 Females from both ASB and NASB were more likely to believe that personal development topics should be the responsibility of the school, with this view most strongly held by females attending the Catholic school.
** This result is even more dramatic when it is considered that Arabic females who practise cultural traditions are less likely to believe that PD topics should be the responsibility of the family than Arabic males who practise cultural traditions.
10 ASB females also appear to value PDHPE more than ASB males.
11 Catholic ASB students appeared less "traditional" than their Muslim ASB peers. The Catholic students valued PDHPE more, were less concerned that cultural values made it difficult for them to participate in PDHPE, agreed more strongly that PDHPE should encourage girls and boys to mix, and disagreed more strongly that PD should be the responsibility of the home.
** An interesting feature of this is that these difficulties are replicated when the sample is reduced to only those who speak Arabic, which is generally used as an indicator of maintaining cultural ties.

Parent Surveys:

The parental responses were varied. They valued the role of PDHPE and the school generally, and there seemed to be no major problems about their children participating at public venues nor being involved in extra-curricular activities. The majority of parents believed that PE activities should be conducted in single sex classes, but also believed that PDHPE activities should involve boys and girls - perhaps an indication of the parents' lack of understanding about what occurs in PE and PDHPE. Generally, parents did not regard such topics as sex education, birth control education and drug education as the responsibility of the family - the authors assume that this infers a role for the school in these areas.

The opportunity to respond to an open-ended question about satisfaction or otherwise with the school's PDHPE program brought a mixture of comments from the parents:

> I think it is good. Children should know all about it. All of them. Yes. I am happy with it. I haven't got any objection. (Fijian Muslim father)

> As Moslem parents, we have no objection to the PDHPE program. We view this area as an extremely sensitive one, but we believe it's necessary to instruct our children in accordance with "the times" but still in respect of Religion (sic) and family traditions. Due to the sensitivity of the topics dealt with in such programs, we feel that it is appropriate to have male and female students separated (sic) during such lessons. (Lebanese Muslim father).

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Not sure what is going on. (Lebanese Muslim mother).

Teacher Surveys:
Thirty three teacher surveys were returned. The teachers were predominantly Australian and generally recognised the importance of PDHPE in sensitive areas. A number of comments were made about the poor standards of health of the students, and the lack of interest shown by parents in their child's education. Some interesting teacher responses were made to open-ended questions about the role of PDHPE in the schools:

> Culturally sensitive PDHPE is very important in this school, and is taken account of (24 years,female).

> I do not feel that the culture or religion discourages students to do physical activity. The only constricting factor would be clothing that must be worn for many types of sporting activities which are not in line with religious beliefs of covering the body (22 year old female).

> Sport ... is outmoded and irrelevant for most schools but especially at a girls' multicultural high school. The whole concept of Elitist (sic) sport and "recreational" sport is irrelevant in preparing students for the future. We need to address the issues with a 21st century mind... PE needs to overcome the natural barriers raised by adolescent girls from any culture as well as the particular cultural inhibitors experienced by Arabic girls...(Female Principal).

> Sport is often considered a second-rate past-time due to a culture of apathy within the school which in my opinion is born from home/cultural background (male teacher, 34 years).

> Health is quite poor for the age group - majority of students are overweight. Sport is not seen by the majority as important and the amount of students participating in sport appears to be declining (male teacher who has been at the school for 6 years).

In reply to the question asking whether PDHPE plays a positive role in the school, one female teacher commented that it was crucial that school addresses controversial topics as the students were "sheltered" from the sensitive issues at home. A male teacher believed the task of educating boys from diverse cultural backgrounds as difficult as "...climbing Everest in thongs!" - a challenge for even the most committed adventurer.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Schools need to become culturally sensitive in what they teach and to be creative in the sources from which they draw their teaching material, so that all students can relate personnally to the curriculum and feel that their backgrounds make a contribution to what they are learning.
2. Teachers need to be aware of problems that may prevent students participating in the PDHPE curriculum area because of their cultural values.
3. Students and their parents need to know the expectations and demands of the curriculum area, and should be encouraged to contribute to its development and implementation.
4. It is also necessary for the perceptions, needs, values and attitudes of teachers to be acknowledged in the presentation of programs. Much literature sees the key to effective multicultural education as the

ability of teachers to recognise their own feelings about cultural diversity (Butt and Pahnos, 1995).

5 Butt and Pahnos (1995) consider it critical that pre-service teachers develop knowledge and skills with culturally diverse students under the supervision of teachers of a different cultural background to their own.

6 As the nature of the PDHPE Key Learning Area continues to change to include more "student welfare" topics, as schools take on more of the roles that have traditionally been fulfilled by the family, as controversial and sensitive issues increasingly make their way into the curriulum of the classroom, then such problems associated with PDHPE and students from culturally diverse backgrounds as have emerged from this study, are going to present themselves more frequently. These will not be solved by ignoring specific groups, by treating everyone the same way, or by initiating a "...drive towards mono-ethnicity..." (Smolicz, 1995, p19), but rather by adopting policies where individuals and groups recognise and learn from each other's differences.

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